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WASHINGTON  
Reagan-Censorship  
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The Reagan administration is indefinitely delaying controversial rules that could force government officials to take polygraph examinations and censor them after they leave public office, two senior administration officials said Tuesday night.

One official said that "the two provisions are to be held in abeyance pending consultations with Congress aimed at strengthening and improving our ability to safeguard national security information while at the same time protecting the rights of individuals."

One of the two officials said the decision had been made in the past few days. He said it would be carried out when President Reagan signs an amendment to his original "decision directive" and notifies the government departments about the changes. The officials spoke on condition that they not be identified.

Reagan had planned on April 15 to widen an order requiring pre-publication approval of any material offered to the public by federal employees who had handled classified material while they were in office. The order would have had the effect of possibly limiting their published writings for the rest of their lives.

Congressional critics said the provision would cover about 128,000 current federal employees once they retire and the figure would grow annually.

The Republican-controlled Senate voted 56-34 last Oct. 20 to delay Reagan's plan by six months.

The first administration official said Tuesday night that representatives of the president have been engaged in negotiations with Congress for the past several weeks and that discussions were continuing.

In the meantime, he said, Reagan was "holding off implementing" the plan and it was uncertain when any version would go in effect. The official said the president's plan would have affected primarily Defense Department employees but others in the government also could have felt its impact.

A third administration source who asked not to be named said the decision to suspend provisions was designed to give the administration some breathing room in the face of fast-moving congressional moves to overturn Reagan's order with permanent legislation. Rep. Jack Brooks, D-Texas, the influential chairman of the House Government Operations Committee, has put in legislation to block the order permanently and plans to move his bill quickly.

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Meantime, in the Senate, Sen. Dave Durenberger, R-Minn., plans to hold subcommittee hearings on the Reagan administration's order later this month. The third source said that the administration was concerned that unless it moved in the interim, it might be unable to negotiate a compromise with Congress, but would be forced simply to accept or reject whatever the Congress decided.

Reagan's order, entitled the National Security Decision Directive No. 84, was issued last March in an effort to tighten up on leaks of sensitive information. It had two sweeping and unprecedented provisions which immediately drew fire from members of Congress and civil liberties, press and legal groups.

Under one provision, all former federal officials with access to the most sensitive intelligence information, known in the government as sensitive compartmented information, would be forced to submit for the rest of their lives to advance government censorship of all their writings and speeches.

Before Reagan's order, such censorship covered only employees of intelligence agencies.

The other controversial provision would sharply expand the use of polygraph machines in leak investigations. Before Reagan's order, federal civil servants had an absolute right to refuse such a test without risking discipline, with several exceptions. The exceptions were the CIA, the National Security Agency and selected other federal intelligence agencies, Reagan's order made such a refusal subject to potential discipline.